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ABSTRACT

In a description of two kinds of undergraduate courses involving development groups, the author differentiates between one course format that alternates a lecture-laboratory approach and one that makes no distinction between lecture and laboratory components. Both categories, cover a variety of cognitive material such as personality theory, general psychology, therapeutic technique, family relationships, and marriage. Most groups use a modified sensitivity group or therapeutic approach, but role playing, autobiographies, journals, interviewing other and fantasy trips constitute supplemental techniques. While the purposes of the groups range from enhancing self-awareness to improving specific behavior, all groups share some commonalities: 1) students receive credit for taking the course; 2) students must learn specific course content; and 3) students use direct observation of their own behavior as a point of departure. (Author/LAA)

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# STUDENT DEVELOPMENT LABORATORY GROUPS: A SHORT SURVEY*

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The recent plethora of doctoral disseratations dealing with the use of group techniques in the college classroom is apparently indicative of increasing experimentation with new curricula in psychology which take advantage of the surging interest in group procedures (Gold, 1967; Gruver, 1971; Linhardt, 1968; Osborn, 1967; Rand, 1969). More specifically, the recent phenomenon which has been appearing with increasing frequency in the literature is concerned with small classroom groups which focus on increased awareness of their own personalities to learn cognitive material.

Although the laboratory method of teaching personality and adjustment is not a newcomer to the campus, it does seem to be gaining momentum. The rationale is that rather than teaching only the cognitive material one should also foster emotional development and enhance perceptions of oneself and others at the same time. The effect is bifural: the student typically learns something about his own personality and also learns a great deal about personality theory, therapeutic techniques, or whatever the course is meant to teach. Although the courses are not offered or meant as psychotherapy, students enthusiastically affirm this technique and claim to gain substantial developmental

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benefits from the small group classroom setting. But they do not experience the stigma which counseling or psychotherapy sometimes denotes (Madison, 1972; Kennedy & Danskin, 1968).

As early as 1949, Faw (1949) published data on what he called a psychotherapeutic method of teaching psychology. One hundred and two students enrolled in a general psychology course met four days a week. Two class periods per week were general lecture periods for the entire class, while the other two days they separated into three discussion groups of equal size. Group A was led in a manner described as a Rogerian therapy group, while Group C was conducted more along the lines of traditional lectures focusing on course content. In Group B, methods used in Groups A and C were employed on alternate days. A number of measures were used including overall grade point average, course examinations, and class participation. Students in Group A averaged more comments per student per day than either B or C, and many more students participated each day in Group A than in either of the other two groups. Mean course examination scores were significantly higher for students in Group A than in Group C even though students in Group C had higher over-all Grade Point Averages. Furthermore, students in Group B who had been exposed to both teaching methods enjoyed the non-directive teaching methods more. Faw concludes that the intellectual growth of members in the therapeutic section did not suffer but was enhanced by the improved over-all relationship.

Another early experiment to test the use of group techniques as opposed to traditional lecture in teaching clinical insight was performed by Bovard (1952). The subjects were two sections of 75

students each enrolled in an elementary psychology course. Course content, assignments and examinations as well as the instructor were the same for both groups with the level of interaction and leader role being the primary dependent variables. To test clinical insight into personality dynamics in the two groups, Bovard recorded student reaction to a film depicting personality dynamics of rejection. Two typescripts of class sessions were submitted to clinical psychologists for their independent evaluation of the degree of clinical insight evidenced in each typescript. Both judges agreed that the group centered section displayed greater clinical insight into personality dynamics than those students in the leader-centered section.

My colleague, Peter Madison, must also be given credit as one of the early experimenters with the developmental technique of teaching. However, he will present his paper following this one so I will allow him to describe his own experiences with the technique.

Often introductory courses attempt to convey some self-insight but do not have this function as a stated goal (Costin, 1959). However, Gibb and Gibb (1952) experimented with "participative action" groups in a general psychology course wherein students made statistically significant gains in role flexibility, self-insight, and group membership skills. Eleven sections of a general psychology class, which were roughly equivalent in sex, age, major, and expectations as to teaching methods, met three days each week for 33 weeks. Ten of the sections were taught by lecture discussion

methods, while the eleventh section was taught by the "participative action" method. Students in the experimental group were required to read two standard texts, selected articles, and a novel. The instructor gave training in role playing, problem centering, evaluation of individual performance, and other methods developed in a group dynamics laboratory. The above mentioned gains in role flexibility, self-insight, and group membership skills shown on pre- and post-test measures were acquired with no apparent loss of normal content acquisition as measured by traditional, objective, and essay examination.

Pratt (1969) presents evidence in favor of the developmental teaching approach in an experiment designed to measure not only the cognitive attainment of students but also their achievement of developmental tasks. The subjects for the study were four groups of 25 students each enrolled in four sections of introductory psychology and a control group of 25 students enrolled in an American history section. Two sections of psychology were taught by each of two teachers, one of whom used the developmental approach to teaching, while the other used a lecture method. One section taught by each teacher was required to attend a one-hour weekly T-group laboratory. Pre- and post-tests, Tennessee Self-concept Scales, and Edwards Personal Preference Schedules were given to all the students. In addition, the psychology students were given a cognitive pre- and post-test. There were no significant differences on any of the instruments between any of the five groups of students in the area of developmental growth. However,

the group taught by the lecture methods combined with a T-group experience did show significant positive differences in cognitive attainment over the other two groups.

Rogers (1971) considers a course he offers as a demonstration of humanistic psychological principles. He requires the student to make a contract for the course, and the first part of the contract involves setting goals, such as learning about themselves or learning the material in the texts. The second part of the contract is to define methods of achieving those goals, such as personal journals, essays, or individual experiments. The class meets as a whole on one day each week for lecture and discussion presentations, and then meets in discussion groups on another day of the week. The discussion groups are neither encounter nor sensitivity groups, but rather are groups for student reaction and to make the course material more personally meaningful.

The studies mentioned above have used the developmental technique primarily for teaching introductory psychology or personality theory, but Heiner (1970) attempted to apply T-group methods to the teaching of family relationships. Sixty students completed four measures: Leary's Interpersonal Checklist, a T-group experience questionnaire, a modified sociometric measure, and The Positive Verbal Index Scale. Two important conclusions were gathered from the study. First, the T-group experience significantly modified the verbal behavior of participants, and this behavior transferred to the back-home classroom setting. Furthermore, the T-group participants from the experimental

population modified the verbal behavior of their peers in the back-home setting so that the peers' verbal behavior resembled their own. Thus, Heiner sees the developmental group method as a valuable method in the teaching of family group situations.

The previous studies that I have mentioned have taken advantage of class lecture in combination with group procedures. Closely associated with this technique, but different in that there is no distinction between classroom and group meetings, is another group of studies. Culbert and Culbert (1968) described a leadership principles course given in the business curriculum at UCLA with an intrapersonal emphasis, as well as teaching conceptual principles. Although the primary method of mobilizing self-potential within the course is involvement in a sensitivity group, there has also been experimentation with art, non-verbal communication, body movement, and fantasy. Attention is given to the influence of stereotypes, blocks in communication, authority relationships, and sexual identity as sources of conflict when they influence personal involvement in interpersonal and group struggles. Evaluation relies in part on traditional course examinations. Although the authors see experience-based learning as an important trend, they note limitations.

The University of Texas is offering a new course called, "The University Experience as Personal Growth." The course is limited to 15 members who keep daily journals describing feelings experienced in reaction to day-to-day situations. In order to facilitate emotional adjustment, the students then talk in class about topics surfacing in the journals.

McGrory (1967) feels that the ability to focus on oneself must be taught along with cognitive material in order to avoid the formation of illogical thinking and irrational ideas. In a human relations class strongly utilizing the rational emotive techniques of Albert Ellis, he experimented with teaching the basis of introspection. Twelve students enrolled in a business curriculum met twice a week for 12 weeks. Besides various journal articles and reaction papers or journals in which the student focused on his own feelings, essay examinations of factual material were given. In a course evaluation, all students praised the course highly and the majority found the content helpful. McGrory concluded that active participation in rational-emotive principles seemed to work as well in a classroom as they do in a counseling setting.

Although of a different theoretical orientation, Friedman and Zinberg (1964) concur with McGrory's rationale for using therapeutic techniques in the classroom as they state: "Complicating the student's task when he first tries to understand the dynamic unconscious and its workings in human behavior is the fact that it works in him too." In an anlysis of an interpersonal behavior course at Harvard College, an unstructured group experience was used by Friedman and Zinberg to teach psychoanalytic theory and procedure. A group of 18 male and female undergraduate students met three times a week for a total of 72 sessions throughout the academic year. They were given a reading list which was similar to one used in a more traditionally taught course, and a set of 16 case studies which had been written by students in preceding

years. They were told that grades for the course would be based on seven assigned papers in addition to a midyear and final examination. The only other instruction about procedure was that the instructor would not be participating or answering questions but would give some direction later. They were encouraged to focus upon what was happening within the group and within themselves. The authors present insights into group themes, group interaction, real and perceived roles of the instructor, as well as transference. They report very high attendance of the weekly sessions, and encourage further experimentation with this style of teaching.

Based on an approach by Berman (1964), Zinberg has edited a book which deals in part with the use of group approaches in teaching nurses (Zinberg, Shapiro, & Gruen, 1964), psychiatrists (Zinberg & Shapiro, 1964), and educators (Zinberg, 1964). In a more recent publication Zinberg & Friedman (1967) report on problems and difficulties in leading these educational therapeutic groups.

## Summary

There are then two different kinds of undergraduate courses which involve development groups. The first follows an alternating lecture-laboratory format while the other makes no distinction between lecture and laboratory; i.e., each class meeting's structure is similar to the last. Whithin each of the two general categories, there is a great variety of cognitive subject material taught. Personality theory, general psychology, therapeutic technique, family relationships, and marriage courses are but a

few of the subjects presented by this method. Most of the groups use a modified T-group or therapeutic approach, but there is a great variety of supplementary special techniques used, e.g., role playing, autobiographies, journals, interviewing others, and fantasy trips.

Many of the references cited in this review have been simply course descriptions with neither objective nor subjective evaluation of their process or outcome. There have, however, been a number of studies which have used reasonably good experimental controls in order to differentiate between developmental teaching methods and more traditional lecture techniques. Usually, these studies utilize a control group as well as pre- and post-psychological testing. Although differences on personality testing do not seem to yield sufficient information so as to substantiate claims of gross personality changes taking place within the classroom, course examination scores used in conjuntion with self-reports are more positive. Students do seem to feel the course material has been made more relevant and there has been no detrimental effect in the learning of cognitive material as shown on course examinations. Thus, the prime value of developmental teaching may lie in making the material more relevant and fun to learn. Any other long-term effects which developmental teaching may foster seem to be frosting on the cake.

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